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ABSTRACT

The two articles in this publication focus on ways of teaching argumentation and debate in the college setting. The first article examines the place of the argumentation and debate course in the speech communication curriculum and suggests cognitive and behavioral objectives and assignments for use in such a course. The second article discusses teaching debate within the philosophy department. It suggests that philosophical reflection can be of great assistance to debate students and their coaches, and contends that making debate part of an interdisciplinary course will stress the unity of human knowledge by showing students how evidence is used to support conclusions in the physical, biological, and social sciences, as well as the humanities. (FL)

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THE ARGUMENTATION AND DEBATE COURSE IN THE 1980s

BARBARA WARNICK

The observation that "we live in a time of change" is certainly not startling. Like most components of the curriculum, forensics education is currently undergoing a number of changes. During the 1960s and 1970s, speech communication scholars expressed concern about the place of argumentation, debate, and forensic activities in higher education.[1] They wondered aloud about the increasingly specialized world of tournament debating, its relevance to the overall curriculum, and its relationship to the discipline of speech communication. Also at issue in this controversy was the role of the argumentation and debate course. What student audience does it serve, and what learning objectives should it have? The purpose of this essay is to examine the place of argumentation and debate in the speech communication curriculum and to suggest some objectives and activities which might be helpful to the forensics educator who teaches the course.

It is difficult to consider the role of the argumentation and debate course without at the same time examining its relationship to the extracurricular forensics program. Glen E. Mills has observed that the course originated in the early twentieth century when intercollegiate debaters sought faculty help in preparing for contests. Mills continued by stating that, "in time the philosophy and method of the course underwent changes in some places, but the dominant adaptations continued to favor the interests of school debaters and future lawyers."[2] Mills made this observation in 1961, however, and since that time essays and textbooks on argumentation indicate that course content varies greatly from one institution to another.[3] Course

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[1] See Don Geiger, "The Humanistic Direction of Debate," *Speech Teacher*, 14 (1965), 101–106; William H. Bennett, "The Role of Debate in Speech Communication," *Speech Teacher*, 21 (1972), 281–288; David Thomas, "Forensics Shock: Making Forensics Relevant to Tomorrow's Higher Education," *Speech Teacher*, 23 (1974), 235–241; and James H. McBath, "Future Directions for Forensics Education," *Speech Teacher*, 24 (1975), 366–368.

[2] Glen E. Mills, "Argumentation in General Education," *Southern Speech Journal*, 26 (1961), 313.

[3] A number of descriptions of and proposals for the course have appeared in speech journals, some of which exphasize argumentation theory to the exclusion of debate practice. See, for example, D. Ray Heisey, "An Honors Course in Argumentation," *Speech Teacher*, 17 (1968), 202–204; and Paul J. Dovre, "The Basic Course in Argumentation: A Prospectus," *Central States Speech Journal*, 22 (1971),

design depends on the needs and interests of students enrolled, the speciality and goals of the instructor, and the presence or absence of an extracurricular program in forensics.

Further complicating this situation is the changing nature of the speech communication discipline. Speech has grown steadily away from teaching skills to undergraduates and has become a more "content-oriented" discipline. As Robert Kully observed, "the discipline of speech communication is moving away from practices and activities toward theory and academics as a means of finding its identity in the academic institution and of justifying its contribution to higher education."[4] In line with this trend, undergraduate courses in speech communication are as likely, if not more likely, to stress recent developments in communication theory, semantics, nonverbal behavior, group process, etc., than they are performance skills. The place of a debate course in all this is left open to doubt, and some departments have discarded it completely.

A second recent development in speech communication which raises questions concerning debate and argumentation is its interdisciplinary "drift." One study of speech communication graduates concluded that debate as an area of specialization within speech dropped from 20.7% of graduates in 1968–69 to 14.6% in 1977–78. Areas of growth were interpersonal and mass communication and communication theory. There was also a steady increase in advertising and journalism, areas not regarded as lying traditionally within the speech communication field.[5]

Developments such as these resulted in the Sedalia conference of forensics educators in 1974. Conference participants agreed that forensics education should remain firmly attached to the administration and curricula of speech communication departments and that forensics directors should be trained in speech communication. In regard to curricular offerings in argumentation and debate, conference participants recommended that "the forensics educator should contribute to curriculum development in speech communication and related disciplines. Particular attention should be given to the application of argumentation to the study of social issues, to serving students with special interests (e.g., prelaw), and to interdisciplinary instruction."[6]

236–241. Some textbooks for the course stress debate as an essential means of acquiring proficiency in argumentation. Examples are Austin J. Freeley, *Argumentation and Debate: Rational Decision Making*, 2nd ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1961); and Douglas Ehninger and Wayne Brockriede, *Decision by Debate*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1978). Meanwhile, other authors focus on argumentation theory applied in all settings of which educational debate is only one. Russel R. Windes's and Arthur Hastings's *Argumentation and Advocacy* (New York: Random House, 1965) is a good example of this approach.

[4] Robert D. Kully, "Forensics and the Speech Communication Discipline: Analysis of an Estrangement," *Journal of the American Forensic Association*, 8 (1972), 196.

[5] David Clavier, Theodore Clevenger, Jr., Susan Eide Khair, and Marwan M. Khair, "Twelve-Year Employment Trends for Speech Communication Graduates," *Communication Education* 28 (1979), 312–313. See also Kathleen M. Jamieson and Arthur D. Wolvin, "Nonteaching Careers in Communication: Implications for the Speech Communication Curriculum," *Communication Education* 25 (1976), 283–291.

[6] McBath, p. 366.

Developments within the speech communication field and the recommendations of forensics educators themselves therefore indicate that the argumentation and debate course no longer should be designed merely to serve tournament debaters, speech majors, and prelaw students. While these groups will probably enroll in the course at most institutions, the course also should be designed to interest and benefit other groups—mass communications and public relations majors, future teachers of speech, and liberal arts majors.

Indeed, argumentation and debate can be one of the most valuable courses in the undergraduate program. I believe it should be designed to stress both argumentation theory and skill development. A course which stresses theory application in actual classroom debates can fulfill many cognitive and behavioral objectives. If students who complete the course successfully fulfill its objectives, they should be able to produce clear, well-reasoned discourse, to develop and recognize sound argument, to locate obscure information through original research, and to recognize the complex problems inherent in public policy decision-making. Argumentation and debate courses also develop basic skills. Students gain experience in critical listening, clear oral expression, rapid, accurate note taking, and organization. Given the current concern about basic skills development, the course can be invaluable to some undergraduates.

The course which I am about to describe would be conducted in a workshop-like atmosphere. A basic debate text would provide a common core of readings in argumentation and debate theory. Independent study projects, diverse debate topic areas, and class reports would supplement common readings and activities and would meet specialized needs of individual students. A heterogeneous group of students can make the argumentation and debate course more interesting and worthwhile to all if individualized instruction and independent study are incorporated into it. I will now list possible course objectives and common activities and then suggest ways in which the course can be designed to fit students' needs and interests.

Course Objectives for Argumentation and Debate

In suggesting cognitive and behavioral objectives for an argumentation and debate course, I realize that some institutions will want to focus on concept development while others will stress performance. Both are needed, however, for the student can become adept at the use of forms of argument only by practicing advocacy. On the basis of class composition and the place of the course in the larger curriculum, the instructor can decide upon an "optimal mix" of the following.

A. *Cognitive Objectives*

During and after completing a course in argumentation and debate, students should be able to:

1. perceive and understand any given question from a wide variety of perspectives;
2. understand the issues in propositions of fact, value, and policy;
3. comprehend and remember basic debate theory;
4. understand the *forms* of argument—casual, inductive, sign, etc.;
5. know the *structure* of argument forms—syllogism, enthymeme, Toulmin model, etc.;
6. know the types of evidence—original, hearsay, biased, reluctant, lay, expert, etc.

B. *Behavioral Objectives*

Upon completion of an argumentation and debate course, students should have achieved a certain proficiency in skills which enable them to:

1. research the topic effectively (to work with government documents, specialized statistical compilations, microfiched documents, etc.);
2. record and organize researched information efficiently;
3. analyze soundly the proposition;
4. present a clearly organized case;
5. listen accurately;
6. take clear, organized, succinct notes (i.e., to flow the debate);
7. prove and extend arguments, avoiding assertion;
8. detect and point up weaknesses in opponents' arguments;
9. cross examine and respond to cross examination;
10. persuade an audience;
11. be an effective critic judge of others' debates.

C. *Course Assignments: Meeting Learning Objectives*

Assignments in an argumentation and debate course should be carefully designed to fulfill the objectives selected by the instructor. The recommendations which follow may not be appropriate in every situation. Their usefulness and importance will depend upon overall course design and on the level of student proficiency.

To guarantee that students analyze a topic area from many perspectives, I recommend that the class members form four-member groups based on career or major interests, select a topic area relevant to those interests, and debate in that topic area for the entire term. There will probably be time for two or three debates, depending upon the extent to which performance skills are stressed. If this is the case, students should be encouraged to switch sides, vary case formats, or debate different types of propositions within the same topic area. If the topic were "mass media communication," for example, a four-person group might debate three propositions during the course of the semester:

Proposition of Fact—	Resolved: That television violence is increasing.
Proposition of Value—	Resolved: That federal government regulation of television programing is desirable.
Proposition of Policy—	Resolved: That the federal government should restrict violence in children's television programing.

Likewise, when debating policy propositions, students could be encouraged to vary case formats. They could begin with traditional affirmative and negative cases early in the term and move to goals, criteria, and comparative advantages affirmatives and negative counterplans later. Their increasing knowledge of debate theory would therefore be complemented by an increasing repertoire of case formats and forms of analysis. Additionally, they would gain increased understanding of the intricacies of public policy decision-making.

Other variations include the study and practice of various debate formats. On or off campus audience debates late in the term provide students who have mastered debating skills the opportunity to analyze diverse audiences and to practice advocacy in "real world" situations. Students can also experiment with two-party Lincoln-Douglas debates, parliamentary

debates, and heckling. Some form of cross examination should be included in at least one assignment as well. Students should be encouraged to observe and evaluate argumentation in televised political debates and public debates in the community.

To provide experience in the use and analysis of various argument forms and structures, the instructor could make "mini-assignments" early in the term which call for audience response and evaluation. Students could design and construct arguments with concealed fallacies or faulty evidence. Class members could then analyze these to detect their weaknesses.

At the time they enroll in the argumentation and debate course, many college undergraduates have not had extensive research experience. Their library research in many cases appears limited to the card catalog and the *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*. If the instructor discovers this to be the case, lectures can be arranged to acquaint students with specialized journals and other research facilities. Legal researchers, government documents librarians, and other specialists could speak to class members and familiarize them with procedures involved in using less accessible resources.

Institutions with an extracurricular forensics program provide additional resources for the argumentation and debate course. Demonstration debates by experienced debaters not enrolled in the course provide inexperienced students with needed performance and role models. They also spark class discussion and analysis of the argumentation and strategies used during the debate.

Videotaping student debates is as useful in the argumentation and debate course as in other speech communication courses. After videotapes have been made, the instructor can meet with debaters to watch the playback and review their presentations with them. Students viewing themselves in a relaxed atmosphere after the debate is over will often detect errors in their own presentations which even their opponents and the instructor have missed.

By now it should be apparent that the sort of course I am describing is activity based and performance oriented. In part this arises from an educational philosophy wherein the students themselves are the source of their learning.[7] Proponents of experiential education believe that what students do not know for themselves, they do not know. In an argumentation and debate course of the sort I am describing, the instructor is a classroom manager who initiates, structures, and reacts to students' work rather than a lecturer and information disseminator. In proposing this sort of syllabus, I realize that it may not be universally appropriate.

The second reason I am proposing a performance course is that competition among students has been shown to be a motivating factor in student learning.[8] Healthy and productive rivalry between students engaged

[7] For examples of the educational philosophy underlying experiential education, see Van Cleve Morris, *Existentialism in Education: What It Means* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966); and David E. Denton, ed., *Existentialism and Phenomenology in Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1974).

[8] Ehninger and Brockriede cite a study by Hurlock, Bykowski, Müller, Whittemore, and Scott which found "(a) competition stimulates increased effort; (b) competition has a greater influence on performance than do appeals to utility and altruism; and (c) the net gain in performance of groups in which rivalry exists over those in which it does not is substantial." This is reported in the first edition of their *Decision by Debate* (New York: Dodd, Mead, & Co., 1963), p. 308.

in competitive advocacy can stimulate effort and academic performance to a much greater extent than can grades or other forms of reinforcement. A third reason for an activity based course is that it allows for individualized instruction. While the class as a whole can undertake a common core of readings, assignments, and activities, a performance and activity course can at the same time provide the freedom for each student to conduct independent projects and adapt the course to his/her own needs.

Auxiliary Activities: Adapting the Course to Student Interest

As mentioned above, many types of students enroll in argumentation and debate. Student leaders, prelaw students, tournament debaters, future speech educators, public relations and mass communications majors, and general liberal arts majors all have different reasons for taking the course. One important way of making the course as relevant as possible to these groups is to allow students to select their topic areas rather than to assign topics. Prelaw students might select propositions concerning the structure of the court system or freedom of speech, for example. Mass communications and public relations majors might choose to debate issues concerning regulation of the mass media, while future teachers might be interested in topics related to secondary and higher educational policies. If the majority of students in the class debate in topic areas in which they already have some background and interest, the research may be of better quality, the students will be more motivated, and the learning will certainly be more relevant. Debating in topic areas relevant to their major also enables students to become more familiar with information and resources particular to their own interest areas.

Independent study projects relevant to the course can provide valuable experiences for diverse groups of students. Public relations and mass communications majors generally see the course as an opportunity to acquire additional experience in persuasive speaking and forms of advocacy. Public relations practitioners' duties, for example, include "supplying speech service to management, including research for speech material, preparation for manuscripts, publishing speeches, running speaker training sessions . . . and conducting speakers' bureaus for use by groups within or outside the community."[9] This group might enjoy arranging and participating in public or televised debates, contacting guest lecturers to speak to the class, and conducting field interviews.

Another group of students have an entirely different set of needs and expectations regarding the argumentation and debate course. This group, future speech educators, received particular attention from the Sedalia conference which recommended that "all colleges that provide teacher-training programs in speech communication should offer formal instruction in the philosophy and methods of directing forensics."[10] Future speech teachers are interested in basic debate theory, in knowing how to judge and critique debates, and in the mechanics of forensics direction. If an additional course in forensics direction is not available, the instructor should involve this group in setting up and conducting a mock or actual

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[9] Judith S. Trent and Jimmie D. Trent, "Public Relations Education: An Opportunity for Speech Communication," *Communication Education*, 25 (1976), 294.
[10] McBath, p. 368.

tournament. Ample time should also be devoted to having this group critique classroom debates and defend their decisions.

Prelaw students and general liberal arts majors hope to master the forms of argument and construct persuasive cases. Prelaw students can study debate as courtroom advocacy by observing mock and actual courtroom trials. The liberal arts major may be interested in the conduct of controversy in a broad range of public forums—the student government, the city council, and the state legislature, for example. Liberal arts majors could observe how different audiences and settings affect argumentation and persuasive appeals used by advocates.

Tournament debaters also may enroll in the argumentation and debate course because they want a comprehensive review of debate theory and an opportunity to familiarize themselves with current theoretical developments in argumentation and debate theory. They should be encouraged to assist fellow students with research problems and strategy development. If their role in the class is appropriate, they can serve as role models and be a motivating influence on other students. Tournament debaters might also enjoy reading, reporting on, and demonstrating concepts and techniques which comprise current debate theory—alternative justification cases, turnarounds, studies counterplans, etc. Such activities would expose less experienced students to current theory and make the class more exciting.

Conclusion

In an era characterized by a shrinking undergraduate population and a decrease in support for extracurricular programs, survival of the argumentation and debate course depends upon its appeal to a broad range of students. Upon completion of their undergraduate programs, these students frequently seek entrance into graduate or professional schools or employment. They are aware of the glut of college graduates entering the labor force and of the fierce competition for opportunities in graduate education. They therefore seek out courses relevant to their needs and interests which will give them a competitive edge when they have completed their undergraduate programs. They want to improve basic skills, develop confidence in their communicative abilities, and compete successfully with their peers. The argumentation and debate course has considerable potential for fulfilling the needs of these students, but only to the extent that it assumes an interdisciplinary focus and departs from the narrow confines of tournament debating.

The argumentation and debate course outlined here makes maximal use of available resources outside the classroom—political and community activity, special library collections, subject matter experts, extracurricular programs, and audio visual equipment. The course is structured to coincide with the needs and interests of students enrolled in it and would encourage independent study and research in students' major areas. If an extracurricular debate program exists, the argumentation and debate course can be compatible with that program, drawing resources from it while contributing to its advancement.

An activity based course would not neglect argumentation theory. Such a course is based on the premise that students understand and apply argument forms and structures most effectively when they use them in persuasive speaking and various forms of advocacy. If the argumentation and debate course successfully encourages a broad range of students to understand and use principles of argumentation, then it will continue to fulfill a vital function in college and university curricula.

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY AND DEBATE

HENRY L. RUF

"What in the world is a debate program doing in a philosophy department?" Having been asked this question several dozen times in the past three years during which I have been traveling the debate circuit, I think I now am ready to give a defensible answer, especially since I now have had three years' experience as a philosopher teaching a debate class. Formal debate is proving to be a very effective educational instrument for teaching in the normative areas of philosophy—logic, ethics, and theory of knowledge.

I realize that this special issue of *Speaker and Gavel* is primarily concerned with examining various possible ways of teaching debate and argumentation and that it is read primarily by those who are looking for good means to attain their academic end of teaching debate as well as possible. Let me suggest, however, that seeing how debate can be used in teaching philosophy can lead to a shift of perspective on debate which can make anyone's teaching of debate more effective. A greater appreciation of the broad educational significance of debate can increase teacher motivation and, therefore, effectiveness, and it can lead teachers to add new dimensions of depth to their courses which can only be of benefit to the students in debate classes. In addition, philosophical reflection upon the logical, ethical, and epistemological issues raised in a typical debate will enable debaters to handle with much more sophistication the theoretical issues which are becoming a larger and larger part of good tournament debating.

I have been using formal debate as a teaching tool in my "Current Moral Problems" classes for the past ten years. I have done so for three sets of educational reasons. First of all, ever since my years of college debating in the fifties at Macalester College, I have been convinced that debate (whether classroom or intercollegiate) supplies more motivation to do research and argument refinement and sophistication than any other tool in the teacher's arsenal. The students' egos get marvelously involved when they know that they must defend their position publicly against attacks from other highly motivated students.

Secondly, debating a controversial moral and social issue reveals to students so clearly the complexity of such issues, the manner in which descriptions of present and past situations, predictions of consequences of proposed social changes, and normative prescriptions and evaluations are intertwined together. In gathering supporting evidence and arguments for each of these sorts of claims they come to see the different sorts of rationales each requires. In making final policy recommendations they come to see how difficult it is to find a single scale on which to measure the final significance of claims about rights, about likely consequences of significant but not earth shattering harms, and about probable risks of major disasters.

Thirdly, by having students debate both sides of a controversial moral issue, they have come to see that sometimes disagreements are only a matter of personal taste and not of moral principle, that sometimes persons of equally good moral intentions can read normative and value priorities differently, and thus make conflicting recommendations, and that a pluralism of moral beliefs and attitudes need not be incompatible with making

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objective appraisals of the correctness of such beliefs. A host of theoretical issues in moral philosophy has forced its way into the consciousness of the students who elected to participate in these classroom debates.

Three years ago, when debate was about to be dropped at West Virginia University, the philosophy department agreed to assume responsibility for it simply because we were convinced of its general educational value. Developing research skills, developing skills in argument construction and evaluation, developing the skills to think quickly on one's feet, gaining substantive knowledge about a host of vital, controversial social policy options, aiding young intellectuals to emotional and social maturity through intense competition with other very bright debaters when decisions on wins and losses are made in a very subjective manner by judges whose abilities range from excellent to mediocre—these, we felt, were educational activities which were very important to maintain. Now that I have taught a regular debate class for three years, in addition to prizing debate for its general educational values, I have developed an appreciation for the way in which philosophical issues can be raised and investigated in such a class. At almost every point in the debate it seems as though major philosophical issues arise which need to be handled. It is this appreciation I want to share with you in this paper. Let me give a number of examples.

Start with the issue of topicality. A host of issues in the field of philosophy of language is raised by the way debaters attempt to explicate the meaning of the resolution. Students need to learn the difference between reportive and stipulative definitions and the reasons why only reportive definitions can be true or false. Once this distinction is made, debaters then can begin to consider how to evaluate the fairness or reasonableness of various stipulative definitions affirmatives might offer for key terms in the resolution. Also, students then can begin to reflect on the manner of determining the necessary truth conditions for paraphrases of the resolution and for explanations of the permissable uses of key words and phrases in the resolution, permissable because of the semantical, syntactical, and pragmatic rules operationally in place in today's English language community.

Two examples, I think, will reveal the importance of such philosophical reflections. First of all, negatives often accuse affirmatives of being nontopical and of offering unreasonable definitions of the resolution. Often there is no clash on this issue because it never becomes clear whether the negative is charging that the affirmative is unreasonably stipulating a definition or is presenting paraphrases and reportive definitions which can not be supported with epistemologically justified reasons, i.e., relevant linguistic practices. In addition, affirmatives often confuse the issue of the reasonableness of definitions offered and the reasonableness of the resolution. At the 1979 NDT Tournament, I heard an affirmative argue that it was unreasonable for a negative to ask them to guarantee employment opportunities to all U.S. citizens who wanted jobs; no plan could ever do that. Of course, that is what the resolution did propose. The affirmative was either giving a negative solvency argument or was presenting a reasonable complaint against the framers of the resolution for placing an unreasonable burden on the affirmative. The affirmative has a right, of course, to choose between alternative paraphrases and reportive definitions when ambiguities exist in common linguistic usage, but the negative surely has no obligation to restrict its interpretation of the resolution to plans which the affirmative believes are defensible.

Secondly, affirmatives habitually say that with their plan they opera-

tionally define the meaning of the resolution or that they are providing one example or interpretation of the meaning of the resolution. Debate students need, therefore, to reflect on the nature and appropriateness of operational definitions. Usually, such definitions are used to select out one paraphrase which the vagueness or ambiguity of the resolution makes possible. Negatives, of course, can countercharge that the linguistic evidence does not leave room for such a possibility.

The key additional standard issue which is raised by this affirmative maneuver is that of determining what value a national debate resolution has at all. Should the affirmative be required to defend the resolution with all of its vagueness and ambiguity, or is it enough to defend one specification or interpretation of its meaning? If each affirmative is allowed to rewrite the resolution with new specificity, then is the negative permitted to accept this new resolution and run as nontopical counterplans anything not identical to the affirmative's plan? Is the negative free to choose to debate the original resolution and run disadvantages against other linguistically permitted interpretations of the resolution?

What function does the debate community want national resolutions to perform? If it wants to grant affirmatives the freedom to choose specificity while requiring the negative to run disadvantages only against the affirmative's chosen plan, and permitting the negative to count as nontopical only those counterplans which lie outside the realm of all linguistically permitted interpretations of the resolution, then it probably should say so explicitly. That certainly places a heavy burden on the negative. If the debate community wants to encourage meta-level debating about the rules of debating, then it probably should say so. If it wants to leave things as they are, then it probably should say this. Then debaters would know that they will have to argue for the merits of letting negatives run counterwarrants or counterplans topical under some interpretations of the resolution not included in the affirmatives' interpretation. Anyway, as of now, debaters need to see the linguistic and value issues involved here and should be ready to do metadebating about the values and disvalues of various ways of treating debate resolutions.

Reflecting on the question of topicality, therefore, provided numerous opportunities for reflecting on issues in philosophy of language, and such reflection can contribute greatly to the debater's level of argumentation in this area. A similar relation exists between the question of negative presumption and philosophical issues in epistemology and ethics-social philosophy. Determining *who* has the burden to prove *what* is as important an issue in these two fields of philosophy as it is in debate.

A variety of reasons have been offered in the literature on debate in support of the traditional belief that the affirmative has the responsibility to provide good and sufficient reasons for adopting the resolution. Some have supported this belief with value arguments resting on the premise that existing institutions and practices should be favored over proposed changes because stability and continuity, in and by themselves, are of such positive worth that changes should be made only when required in order to avoid very probable and very significant harms. Others have attempted to support the traditional belief with the claim that, "We know the effects of existing institutions and practices but we can only guess at the consequences of the proposed changes."

These two supporting reasons, however, are open to serious ethical and epistemological challenges. Dictatorial stability and the continuation of injustice and exploitation certainly are of no value in and of themselves. Additionally, acquiescence by the masses does not prove there is no need

to change the status quo. We should have learned from Hegel, Marx, and the existentialists that exploitive power elites can gain control over a culture and its institutions of law, religion, education, and recreation, and that they can produce masses of people who will not demand their moral rights to personal freedom, autonomy, and social and economic justice. Furthermore, those who prize status quo practices over change are working from the unexamined assumption that it would be a bad idea to let each new generation start from scratch in organizing itself as a community. Good reasons may exist for our generation to bind a later one, but it is by no means immediately obvious that one group of people has the right to bind later generations, that only one set of founding fathers should be free to set up rules of the game. The epidemic of nationalistic feelings which have created so many new nation states in the last thirty years suggests that many strong willed people are demanding the right to set up their own rules for the game of communal living. Reflection in the fields of moral and social philosophy lend little support to the idea that preserving the status quo is always, *prima facie*, to be prized over social change. The advocacy of keeping things as they are may need as much defense as advocating change.

In a similar manner, epistemological reflection suggests often that it is as difficult to predict the consequences of continuing present practices as it is to predict the effects of making social changes. There are two sets of reasons for this difficulty. First, it is extremely difficult to know what consequences are being produced by a particular institution or practice even when it has been observed for some time, because of the way in which any given social institution, rule, or practice is embedded in a complex social context which includes other rules, practices, human attitudes, moods, and beliefs. What are the effects of plea bargaining? One would know this only by knowing what would happen if that practice were stopped while everything else remained the same. The latter, of course, involves predicting the effect of a social change.

The second problem with claiming that knowing the effects of present practices enjoys epistemological privilege over knowing the effects of change lies in the fact that such a claim assumes a static world in which past effects will continue as future effects. This assumption is open to serious challenge. The physical environment is changing because of pollution, oil consumption, atmospheric temperature rise, etc. The social environment certainly is undergoing extremely rapid change. There seems to be as much reason to suppose that future effects will differ from past effects as to suppose that they will be the same. Negative presumption cannot be justified this way but thinking about it raises some very important philosophical issues.

Philosophical considerations in epistemology and ethics exist which can be used to defend negative presumption, but they also open up some new options for affirmatives. One could argue that the affirmative has the burden of proof because it is advocating change and should give justifying reasons in support of the claim. Since, epistemologically, it is better to be skeptical about any claim, the burden of proof should rest with the believer and advocate. Ethically, the burden of proof must lie with one who would restrict our freedom, with the one who says we are bound and obligated to do something because of the presupposition that each person has a moral right to do whatever one wants to do until someone can give a good reason for believing there is something wrong with that behavior. The affirmative says we should do something and, therefore, has the burden of proof to justify that action.

The epistemological preference for doubting over believing has a strong historical pedigree in Western philosophy. Socratic questioning and Cartesian doubting have kept epistemological concerns at the foundation of most Western philosophy. Recently, however, this preference has come under serious challenge. Wittgensteinians have argued that doubting needs as much justification as believing. Existentialists have claimed a right to live by leaps of faith when one has no reason to believe one is choosing the false or impossible. Both have argued that doubting itself presupposes knowing how to do things with words and concepts and this, in turn, presupposes extensive knowledge about ourselves and our physical, social, and interpersonal environment, knowledge which creates our whole form of life and which need not be doubted.

Some of the most interesting issues in epistemology today turn on deciding which beliefs are and which are not *prima facie* acceptable. Reflecting in a debate class on negative presumption provides a marvelous opportunity for raising these issues. Luckily for negative debaters, few philosophers claim that social policy recommendations have presumption resting on their side. Among other reasons, this is because such recommendations say we ought to do something and should not be left free in this area to do as we please. The ethical principle which lies at the base of democratic liberalism holds that all such restrictions on freedom must be justified to each of us because sovereignty must rest with the autonomous individual. The affirmative, therefore, has the burden of proof.

If this is the justification for assigning presumption to the negative, then it is important to realize that an affirmative can use this ethical principle which enunciates the priority of freedom by challenging any restriction existing in the status quo. The affirmative can challenge the negative to prove that good and sufficient reasons exist for having such a restriction—a restriction on what high school newspapers can publish, or young adults can smoke, or dying patients can do to end suffering. Very quickly the affirmative can shift the burden of proof over onto the negative. The negative must either justify current restrictions or attack the principle which assigns moral priority to free, sovereign, autonomous, individual persons.

It is also important to note that the priority of freedom principle can be used to show that all affirmative advantages and negative disadvantages really have to deal with harms to be prevented, and not merely with nice things to be gained. If restricting freedom is always a *prima facie* harm, then restrictions on freedom can be justified only if necessary to prevent even worse harms. Compulsion may be used only to prevent evils and not merely to produce benefits. Comparative advantage cases, therefore, are really comparative disadvantage cases. Finding and defending criteria for measuring degrees of harm and evil become primary tasks facing any debater. This is just another example which shows that a tremendous amount of education in moral philosophy can occur in a debate class.

There are two other issues in debate theory which these philosophical reflections force us to consider. First of all, has the affirmative met its burden of proof even if its proves that its plan is sufficient to gain an advantage which the status quo is inherently prevented from gaining (given that there are no overriding disadvantages)? In other words, a good reason has been given for adopting the plan. Why, then, must the affirmative prove that its plan is either *necessary* to gain the advantage or is *superior to all other possible plans*, as some debate theorists claim? Why doesn't the affirmative have the epistemological and ethical right to give its good reason and then wait for negative teams to prove that the reason

isn't good enough because there are better ways to gain the same result? Is a good reason a sufficient reason in the absence of a negative counterplan? The philosophical considerations I have introduced would seem to suggest that a plan can be justified without being proven to be the best among all possible alternatives.

These same considerations seem also to throw a great deal of light on the issue of inherency. Something other than a lack of knowledge about existing harms must keep the status quo from solving the problem identified by the affirmative. Otherwise, we don't need the affirmative's plan; we only need the affirmative to make the need known. Analysis of this inherency issue provides a marvelous opportunity for considering the nature of laws and rules existing in a society, a typical issue in social philosophy and in the philosophy of law. Unfortunately, many debaters and some judges consider as laws or rules only requirements and prohibitions, mandates to do or not to do something. This overlooks the very important role which authorizing rules play in a democracy. In the law, as in morality, sovereignty lies with the individual and priority goes to freedom. Governments need explicit authorization in order to be able to do something. The absence of such authorization, therefore, constitutes as significant a structural barrier to the status quo being able to solve the problem as does a legislative or judicial prohibition or an entrenched attitudinal refusal to take the needed action.

Let me move on to some other debate issues which have important philosophical implications. Teaching rebuttal techniques provides a marvelous opportunity for teaching a great deal of logic, deductive and inductive. An excellent way to teach students the difference between the validity and strength of arguments and the truth of premises and conclusions is to have the students become aware of the two ways in which a first negative can refute an affirmative case. Since the affirmative has the burden of proof, the negative can win simply by pointing out that the affirmative has not proven its point. This can be done either by showing that affirmative claims about significance, inherency, and solvency do not follow from the rationale provided (in other words, the affirmative's line of reasoning is flawed and its arguments are neither valid deductive arguments nor strong inductive arguments) or by showing that the rationale is based on questionable and undefended premises. Alternatively, the negative can introduce arguments of its own which purport to prove the falsity of the affirmative's claims.

A tremendous educational advance has been made when any student sees that *proving that someone has not proven* a point is very different from proving the negation of that point. A tremendous advance in understanding is gained when one comes to see how very difficult it is to prove anything when it comes to questions of social policy. I think that debaters who work primarily with conclusionary quotations from so-called experts will not only lose to good debaters but they will fail to learn, and appreciate, how difficult it is to prove what the consequences of a social policy are or what the net significance of those consequences comes to. Debaters who recognize this and the reasons for it certainly will learn a great deal about how to make inductive inferences from statistical premises and how to proceed in evaluating various sorts of studies. At this point debate training and logic instruction feed upon each other.

Examining affirmative significance and solvency claims and negative plan attacks also provides opportunities for reflecting philosophically on the nature of causality and the role of causal claims in inductive arguments

and scientific theorizing. The need for such reflection becomes painfully apparent when one listens to debaters talk about what has or has not been proven to be the cause or effect of something or when one reads judges' ballots and sees the impossible demands some are making on affirmatives to prove solvency and on negatives to prove disadvantages. Given that many current scientific theories do not even talk in terms of causation, and given that many demonstrably strong inductive arguments to not contain any causal claims, debaters and coaches need to do a great deal of philosophical reflecting on this matter.

One marvelous issue to use in getting students to understand the nature of logical contradictions and how to avoid them is the typical affirmative claim that first negative inherency or solvency claims contradict second negative plan attacks or that second negative workability attacks contradict disadvantage claims. Negatives find themselves in difficulty here only when they agree with the affirmative that the affirmative plan will produce a certain kind of result and when the negative wants to claim that this result causes still further consequences which are disasterous. If the negative does construct such a disadvantage, then they will contradict themselves if they also present workability arguments or if they argue under inherency that the status quo will and should produce the exact same consequences as the affirmative. There are numerous ways to avoid contradictions here, however. The negative can argue that the disadvantages are not caused by the consequences which the affirmative claims from its plan but by the affirmative's *way* of producing those consequences. In this latter case, one could still present workability attacks (trying won't produce advantages, but will produce disadvantages) and in the former case inherency attacks are still possible (the affirmative *way* produces disadvantages whereas the way used by the status quo does not).

This same issue also provides an excellent opportunity to reflect on the nature and significance of dilemmas. Negatives often try to avoid contradicting themselves by arguing hypothetically and forcing the affirmative into a dilemma. Either the plan won't work or it will cause unjustifiable disadvantages. This can be a perfectly good argument. There is no need to prove which half of the dilemma is true. Either is sufficient to warrant rejecting the affirmative proposal. A very different situation exists, however, when the negative claims that they are arguing hypothetically for both sides of a contradiction and that they want the judge to decide which of the two conclusions to believe. Now we have no material dilemma. Now the negative is introducing arguments without committing themselves (even in the context of the debate) to any of the arguments' conclusions. A judge might very well want to conclude in such a situation that the negative is defending no position (but only introducing positions) and thus that there is no negative position with which to agree; no choice exists but to agree with the affirmative. Regardless of a judge's debate philosophy, debaters and judges need to keep dilemma arguments, categorically defended, separate from arguments introduced hypothetically for judge consideration and choice.

There is one final set of debate issues on which I like to concentrate in my course: that clear reasoning requires the disentangling of arguments and that one keep in clear focus the primary thrust of one's overall line of reasoning. These issues center on the affirmative plan and its traditionally acknowledged right to fiat this plan into effect and help students understand the nature of social policy normative claims and what constitutes good reasons for justifying them.

Debate resolutions usually claim that the United States federal government should adopt a certain social policy, e.g., guarantee job opportunities to all U.S. citizens or strengthen the regulation of mass media communication in the United States. As a moral and social philosopher I find these worthy resolutions to debate. It is important for citizens, congresspersons, judges, and regulatory board members and presidents to consider the merits and demerits of such proposals. Before returning to the debate circuit three years ago, I thought it was understood by all in the debate community that the convention of granting affirmative fiat power was a device used to get going the thought experiment—the debate about and the consideration of the merits of the policy. Imagine that this policy were in force, that this plan were in operation. Would this be a good thing? What advantageous consequences would result? What disadvantageous effects can be expected? On balance, would it be a good thing to have existing in our social world? Permitting the affirmative to fiat the plan into existence allowed all the debaters to focus their attention on the normative nature of the resolution and to not get sidetracked on irrelevant arguments about whether the resolution and plan would be adopted, put in place, or kept in place.

One can imagine my surprise, therefore, when I found a great portion of the debate involved with issues which seemed to have nothing to do with the normative resolution of what the federal government should do. Affirmatives were including in their plans complex provisions to create powerful, protected boards with protected funds and enforcement mechanisms to guarantee that the federal government would not cancel out the affirmative's policy and plan. Negatives in turn were running disadvantages against creating such protected boards, funds, and enforcement mechanisms and against affirmatives having the power to bypass democratic procedures and to fiat plans into existence. Negatives were also running workability arguments against unprotected boards and funds, claiming that congress or the president would cut authorization and/or funding.

It seemed as though a monster had been created which was distracting debaters' attention away from the original normative resolution. It seemed to me, as an outsider coming in, that a set of practices had developed which was changing yearly a very important proposed resolution (Resolved that the federal government should . . .) into a new very insignificant resolution (Resolved that the affirmative should implement by direct fiat a plan to . . .). As an educator and as a social philosopher, it seems to me that a great deal has been lost with the rise of this current tradition. Lines of reasoning get muddled. Focus on the intrinsic merits and demerits of social policy options get fragmented and, at worst, get abandoned entirely.

That congress, the president, or the courts will or might nullify the affirmative plan does not show that they should do so anymore than the fact that they won't implement the plan shows that it is false to claim that they should do so. If it is true that the federal government should be doing something, then it is true that it should put the plan into operation and keep it in operation. What the government would, will, or might do provides no reason for saying what the government *should* do.

Given that resolutions usually say nothing about how long the federal government should continue doing the action specified or how it should go about administering the policy when in place, these are specifications which the affirmative may have to deal with. Workability and disadvantage arguments against such plan specifications do seem appropriate for they can reveal demerits of the policy itself and do not turn on the issue of

whether the federal government would implement or nullify the plan itself. The issues of authorization and de-authorization of the policy and plan are the issues which seem to be irrelevant when considering whether a social policy should be adopted. How things work out when authorized and operational is always relevant. In an effort to ascertain this, affirmatives are given fiat power so that the thought experiment can be carried out.

In this paper I have attempted to point out how teaching debate as a philosophy class can lead to consideration of extremely important issues in philosophy of language, logic, ethics, social philosophy, and philosophy of law. I have also attempted to show how philosophical reflection in each of these areas can be of great assistance to debaters and coaches. Let me conclude this paper by pointing out one other way debate can be used as a general educational tool.

At West Virginia University we offer an interdisciplinary course on the nature of evidence. This course stresses the unity of human knowledge and examines the manner in which evidence is used to support conclusions in the physical, biological, and social sciences and in the humanities, especially conclusions about how practical problems are to be solved. Next year we are going to experiment using typical debate resolutions and arguments in teaching this course because we believe that they reveal so clearly the unity of human knowledge and the way evidence is used in each area. Arguments about energy systems, weapons systems, pollution, and health care will introduce students to the natural sciences. Arguments about unemployment, inflation, and the criminal justice system will do the same for the social sciences. Free press and privacy arguments will introduce students to the normative aspect of the humanities. Debate instructors who have researched recent debate resolutions seem ideally suited to teach such a multidisciplinary course. Putting on debates in such a course should serve as an excellent pedagogical device for learning in such a course.

At West Virginia University we believe that debate belongs in a multidisciplinary context, and we are happy to have it in our philosophy department, contributing significantly to our instruction in logic, epistemology, and moral and social philosophy, even as we try to supply some understanding of the philosophical issues which contemporary debate raises. We urge all debate programs to move out from any narrow confines in which they may find themsleves and become an integral part of the entire educational community. I do believe that you will have a better program. It might even by one which deans will feel better about supporting financially.